

To the Honorable Commissioners of the FCC,

I am writing to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. I believe all FCC rules in question should be retained. These rules set limits on concentration of the broadcast industry and serve the public interest by preserving diversity of ownership in the broadcast marketplace. These rules are; The Television-Radio Cross-Ownership Rule, The Broadcast-Newspaper Cross Ownership Ban, The National Television Ownership Rule, The Duopoly Rule for Radio, The Local Television Ownership Rule, and The Dual Network Rule.

The great privilege to carry on informed debate and discussion of current events, both locally and globally, is part of the founding philosophy of this country. If the avenues for sharing information are restricted to very few, on-ramps to those avenues become fewer and the quality and diversity of the information presented will decay. The largest media companies, driven by a mantra of "economies of scale," are determined to consolidate as many media outlets as possible. What's the likelihood that diverse speech will be maintained when multiple outlets are controlled by single entities bent on homogenization?

As a writer, I know first hand the importance of freedom of expression. The ability to say things that are potentially challenging to audiences at large, or possibly critical of society's sacred cows and special interests, lies at the heart of what I do. If the channels to a potential audience -- be they broadcast television production, cable programming channels, local television stations, or even newspapers that promote and review independent works -- fall into the hands of even fewer corporate owners, sharing my work or the work of any artist will become much harder.

In such an environment, the commercial interest inevitably compromises the public interest. The FCC has rules limiting ownership to preserve the ecology of a healthy marketplace of ideas. If the FCC undermines this ecology by removing the rules, it undermines the future health of the marketplace of information.

Congress and the Supreme Court have long recognized that a functioning democracy depends on vibrant speech. These days, speech is carried furthest by media that must remain open to independent and unconventional views. An open and protected market of ideas stimulates the American people and facilitates our ability to speak with one another. If we exist in an environment in which our outlets of creative expression and news information are controlled by one or two giant companies, our ability to open informed discussion is restricted.

I urge you to rule in the public interest on this matter. The public interest will be served by preserving the FCC's Broadcast Media ownership rules.

Thank you.

Peter O.E. Bekker